

House Republican Press Release

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Dems Reject Measures Offered by Rep. Miller to Lessen Impact of Affordable Housing on Towns



Proposals Would Have Helped Towns Targeted by Affordable Housing Developers

Two proposals to reform the state's affordable housing law proposed Tuesday by state Representative Lawrence G. Miller would have given municipalities more protection from unscrupulous "affordable housing" developers and given local land use boards more control over projects proposed for their towns, Representative Miller said today.

Representative Miller made the proposals during debate on the floor of the state House of Representatives. The measures, offered as amendments to a housing preservation bill (**Senate Bill 545**) were rejected by the majority Democrats on party line votes.

"The effect of one of my amendments would have been to require applications for affordable housing projects proposed for towns that currently have little or no control over them to go through the same kind of approval process by local planning and zoning commissions that is required of all other development proposals," said Representative Miller, R-122nd District. "My other proposal would have directed the state Office of Policy and Management to establish a review committee that would evaluate the impact of a proposed affordable housing project on the host community and submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the applicant and the local planning and zoning commission."

"Neither of my proposals would have radically changed the state's affordable housing act and they would have given communities like Stratford and Shelton more control over the design and location of high density affordable housing complexes," Representative Miller said.

"Under the existing statute, if 10 percent of a town's housing stock does not include dwelling units that fit the act's narrow definition of affordable housing, unscrupulous developers can use the law to force towns to accept such projects in locations where they are completely inappropriate – such as areas zoned for single-family housing, business and commercial development, and neighborhoods where streets, water and sewer lines are inadequate to support high density development," Representative Miller said. "One of my amendments would have changed the law to require that only five percent of a town's housing stock be considered affordable under the law, which would prevent developers

from appealing denials of their projects to state housing courts, which almost always side with the developers.”

“The law makes it almost impossible for a town to win when a developer appeals an unfavorable decision on an affordable housing project to a housing court,” Representative Miller said. “In appeals involving a land use board’s denial of any other kind of project, the burden of proof is on the developer - not the town. Under the law, when a local planning and zoning commission rejects an affordable housing project and the developer appeals the ruling to the housing court, the burden of proof is on the municipality to show that the denial was justified rather than on the developer to prove that the decision was wrong.”

“Many Connecticut residents believe – and rightly so – that the state is usurping the authority of local planning and zoning boards through the affordable housing law and through its power to require communities to accept residential group homes that do not have to go through the normal application process,” Representative Miller said.

“When high density affordable housing projects are built in areas of a town where schools, streets, water and sewer lines are inadequate, local property taxpayers end up footing the bill for millions of dollars in improvements to provide those services,” Representative Miller said. “When towns like Stratford try to protect residential property values and their communities’ quality of life by fighting inappropriate affordable housing projects in court, the legal costs can be astronomical. In Stratford, we have already run up legal costs amounting to more than \$400,000, and the end is not yet in sight.”

“Almost all of the majority Democrats voted against my amendments, including legislators who represent suburban and rural districts that could be threatened by developers who have no scruples about using the affordable housing law to make a quick buck. By doing so, they thumbed their noses at thousands of homeowners whose property values are threatened by developers who are targeting their neighborhoods for high-density, multi-family housing complexes,” Representative Miller said.

“If my proposals had passed, affordable housing developers would once again have had to go through the normal approval process with local land use boards. Working with municipal planning and zoning commissions, developers would have been required to build in areas suitable for high density projects – and land use boards would have been able to require design changes that would have improved the quality of their projects and made them more acceptable to neighboring property owners,” Representative Miller said.